

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-25 IO-12 ADP-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03

RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 RSR-01 /127 W

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R 281448 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6277

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY SANAA

USCINCEUR

COMIDEASTFOR

USINT CAIRO

USMISSION USUN

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BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PBOR KU IZ

SUBJ: KUWAIT- IRAQ BORDER CLASH

REF: KUWAIT 938

SUMMARY: FONMIN OFFICIAL CONFIRMED MARCH 28 THAT BORDER SITUATION UNCHANGED EXCEPT FOR PULLBACK OF SOME IRAQI HEAVY EQUIPMENT; AL- SAMITA POST STILL HELD BY IRAQIS. KUWAITIS AWAITING IRAQI DELEGATION SCHEDULED ARRIVE WEEK OF APRIL 8-14 AND PLAN
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CONTINUE INSIST ON 1963 BOUNDARY. MEANWHILE THIRD COUNTRY MEDIATORS HAVE LEFT AND KUWAITIS ROUNDING UP IRAQIS FOR SAFE-KEEPING. EMBASSY HAS NO INDICATION DIRECT SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN BORDER CLASH ALTHOUGH KUWAITIS SUSPECT IT. WE ALSO BELIEVE IRAQI TERRITORIAL DEMANDS ARE REAL AND CANNOT BE BOUGHT OFF. END SUMMARY

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF MARCH 28, DIRECTOR FONOFF POLITICAL DEPT., ESSA AL- HAMAD, PROVIDED FOLLOWING LATEST INFORMATION ON KUWAIT- IRAQ BORDER SITUATION.

2. KUWAITIS AND IRAQI FORCES REMAIN AT BORDER. IRAQIS HAVE PULLED BACK SOME OF THEIR HEAVY EQUIPMENT BUT THEY CONTINUE TO OCCUPY AL- SAMITA POST.

3. AL- HAMAD SAID IRAQIS HAD EARLIER MADE ORAL REQUEST TO KUWAITIS TO ENCAMP ON KUWAITI SIDE OF BOUNDARY NEAR UMM QASR AND KUWAITIS HAD NOT OBJECTED. (ROAD BUILDING, HOWEVER, HAD NOT BEEN SANCTIONED.) WHEN KUWAITIS RECENTLY ASKED THAT IRAQI ENCAMPMENT BE REMOVED, IRAQIS DECLINED ON GROUNDS THEY WERE ON IRAQI TERRITORY.

4. AL- HAMAD MENTIONED THAT IRAQIS HAD BUILT A ROAD FROM KUWAIT/ IRAQ BOUNDARY IN SOUTHERLY DIRECTION JUST WEST OF AL- SAMITA POST, THEN SOUTHEASTERLY, THEN TURNING SHARPLY BACK IN NNW DIRECTION. HE SAID IRAQIS WERE CLAIMING SOUTHEASTERLY ROAD GENERALLY CONSTITUTED BOUNDARY WHICH ALSO INCLUDES ISLANDS OF WARBAH AND LIBIYAN IN IRAQI TERRITORY.

5. THIS POSITION WAS UNACCEPTABLE TO KUWAIT, AL- HAMAD SAID, SINCE 1963 AGREEMENT (WHICH RATIFIED A 1932 AGREEMENT) ALREADY DESCRIBED AGREED BOUNDARY. EARLIER BOUNDARY NEGOTIATIONS HAD ALSO CLEARLY AGREED THAT WARBAN AND BUBIYAN WERE KUWAIT ISLANDS.

6. KUWAITI POSITION, ACCORDING TO AL- HAMAD, REMAINS THAT KUWAIT WILL NOT NEGOTIATE ON THE BOUNDARY UNTIL IRAQI FORCES ARE WITHDRAWN FROM KUWAITI TERRITORY. THIS IS APPARENTLY NEGOTIABLE SINCE AL- HAMAD SAID KUWAITIS ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO A VISIT BY AN IRAQI TEAM DURING WEEK OF APRIL 8-14 FOR BOUNDARY NEGOTIATION ONLY. PRESUMABLY KUWAITIS WILL CONSULT WITH IRAQIS EVEN THOUGH IRAQI FORCES ARE STILL AT AL- SAMITA, AND THEY MAY BE FORCED TO NEGOTIATE AS WELL.

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7. KUWAITI TACTICS IN ANY NEGOTIATION, ACCORDING TO AL- HAMAD, ARE:

(A) TO INSIST UPON 1963 AGREEMENT AS BINDING; (B) IF IRAQIS REJECT THIS, TO FALL BACK TO 1932 NEGOTIATIONS (SAME BOUNDARY); AND IN ANY EVENT TO NEGOTIATE ONLY ON BASIS PRESENT BOUNDARY. INCIDENT-ALLY, AL- HAMAD SAID HE BELIEVES IRAQIS GREATLY UNDERESTIMATED STRENGTH OF KUWAITI REACTION TO ATTACK.

8. IF NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE PARTIES ARE NOT SUCCESSFUL, NEXT STEP WILL BE A MEDIATING GROUP OF SEVERAL ARAB COUNTRIES TO BE AGREED ON JOINTLY BY KUWAIT AND IRAQ. IF THIS DOES NOT BRING A SOLUTION, KUWAIT WILL APPEAL TO ARAB LEAGUE.

9. ALL VISITING MEDIATORS HAVE NOW RETURNED TO THEIR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES AND SITUATION IN KUWAIT REMAINS QUIET. GOK IS USING TIME, HOWEVER, TO QUIETLY ROUND UP IRAQIS AND PUT THEM AWAY WHERE THEY WILL NOT CONSTITUTE ANY THREAT TO SECURITY OF STATE.

10. COMMENT: MAN IN STREET HERE IS VERY SUSPICIOUS OF IRAQIS AND SOVIETS. TYPICALLY, HE IS CONVINCED THAT IRAQIS ARE ACTING AS PAWNS OF RUSSIANS WHO ARE SEEKING SOME SORT OF WIDER INFLUENCE IN GULF. HE ALSO SUSPECTS, JUDGING FROM PAST EXPERIENCE, THAT ANY SOLUTION WILL COST THE KUWAITIS DEARLY IN TERMS OF SOME SORT OF FINANCIAL PAYMENT. EMBASSY TENDS BELIEVE THAT SOVIETS HAVE HAD ADVISORY ROLE AND HAVE SUGGESTED THAT IRAQ SHOULD HAVE MORE SECURE AND LESS WELL OBSERVED CHANNEL TO AND BASE AREA AT UMM QASR, BUT WE HAVE NO INDICATION OF DIRECT SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN THE BORDER CLASH. RE DEMANDS FOR MORE KUWAITI MONEY, WE HAVE SEEN NO INDICATION THAT THIS IS IRAQI OBJECTIVE. ON OTHER HAD, WE BELIEVE IRAQI TERRITORIAL DEMANDS ARE REAL AND CANNOT BE BOURGHT OFK.

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